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Public Health Reports

Treasury Department, United States Marine-Hospital Service. Published in accordance with act of Congress approved February 15, 1893.

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UNITED STATES.

RÉSUMÉ OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE U. S. MARINE-HOSPITAL SERVICE.

[Reprint from the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1899.]

MARINE-HOSPITAL SERVICE.

The Surgeon-General of the Marine-Hospital Service reports that the past year, being the one hundred and first of the existence of the Service, has been the most active in its history. The number of patients treated in the marine hospitals and dispensaries exceeded that of any previous year, and the duties of the Service in relation to quarantine and public health were largely increased, both in volume and variety, by reason of the war with Spain and the resulting territorial acquisitions.

The Service owns and operates 22 marine hospitals, and there are besides 107 stations where patients receive hospital or dispensary treatment. During the fiscal year 1899 the total number of patients was 55,489, of which number 12,610 were treated in hospital.

Professional aid was given to other branches of the Government service as follows:

To the Revenue Cutter Service, in the examination of 990 applicants for the position of cadet, engineer, and seaman; to the Steamboat-Inspection Service, in the examination of 1,860 pilots for color-blindness, 64 being rejected; to the Life-Saving Service, in the examination of 1,275 applicants for the position of surfman, and the examination of 363 claims of surfmen for the benefits provided by section 7 of the act

of May 4, 1882; to the United States Coast Survey, examinations, 36; to the Light-House Service, examinations, 14; to the Naval Reserve, examinations, 8. The total number of physical examinations was, therefore, 4,179, of which number 250 were rejected.

Aid was also extended to the Immigration Service by the medical inspection of 297,785 immigrants; to the Civil Service Commission in making physical examinations; and to the Army and Navy by the reception of patients in marine hospitals, and by the detail of medical officers for sanitary supervision of United States Army transports. These officers were gradually withdrawn after Marine-Hospital officers had been assigned to quarantine duty in ports of Cuba and Porto Rico.

During the year the hospitals have received special attention in the matter of repairs and preservation and ward equipment. The medical libraries have been increased by the addition of the latest standard works; the operating rooms have received new and improved instruments and appliances, including X-ray machines, and the laboratories have been provided with photographic outfits. A new service ambulance has been adopted and supplied to a large number of the stations.

New purveying depot.

As mentioned in the last annual report of the Service, the business of the purveying division had reached such proportions that the establishment of a purveying depot in New York became necessary.

After careful consideration, a suitable building was secured under lease in New York and the purveying depot transferred thereto during the past summer. The space in the Bureau thus vacated has permitted the enlargement of the Bureau organization, required by the additional duties imposed upon it.

Marine hospital for consumptives, Fort Stanton, N. Mex.

Upon application of the Surgeon-General, the Secretary of the Interior was requested to transfer to this Department, for the treatment of consumptive patients of the Marine-Hospital Service, the abandoned military reservation known as Fort Stanton, N. Mex., and on April 1, 1899, an Executive order was signed to that effect. A medical officer was placed in command, and preparations were made for the reception of patients, who are now being transferred.

This measure will not only be of benefit to the patients treated in this favorable climate, but will relieve the marine hospitals of these contagious cases, and will be of material aid to the great movement now being urged throughout this and other countries in suppressing this communicable disease. Legislation will be requested for the development of this sanitarium.

New marine hospital for New York.

The Surgeon-General again refers to the necessity of Congress making an appropriation for a marine hospital for the port of New York. The present arrangement for the care of sick and disabled seamen at the principal port of the United States in a building leased from time to time is unsatisfactory. I concur in his recommendation.

Medical corps.

The medical corps at the end of the fiscal year consisted of 83 commissioned medical officers. During the year, after successful examination, as required by law, 16 applicants were commissioned as assistant surgeons. Since June 30, 10 have been appointed. There are, in addition, 95 acting assistant surgeons, 11 sanitary inspectors, and 38 hospital stewards—a total of 144 noncommissioned officers. In addition to the commissioned and noncommissioned officers, there are about 400 attendants and quarantine employees when the marine hospitals and quarantine stations have their full complement of men. This number is of necessity largely increased during epidemics.

Three assistant surgeons contracted yellow fever, and 1 died of this disease October 12, 1899, while engaged in the work of preventing its spread in Key West. The Fifty-fifth Congress passed a law authorizing the payment of the amount of salary and allowances for two years to the legal representatives of an assistant surgeon who died of yellow fever under like circumstances in 1893. The Surgeon-General recommends the passage of a general law granting a like amount in the event of the death of any officer in the active performance of his duties. He points to the fact that these officers are subject to change of station, as are officers of the military and naval establishments, and ordered to posts of exceptional danger; also, that like provision is made for the Life-Saving Service. The Secretary concurs in his recommendation, with the limitation that the officer's death should be occasioned by an infectious or contagious disease, acquired by him in the discharge of his official duty.

Expenditures.

The expenditures from the Marine-Hospital fund during the fiscal year 1899 amounted to \$680,897.71. The balance on hand at the close of the fiscal year was \$683,187.93. The amount available from the appropriation for the prevention of the introduction and spread of epidemic diseases at the beginning of the fiscal year was \$457,190.93, and the balance remaining to the credit of this appropriation at the close of the fiscal year was \$292,650.26. The sum of \$100,000 was added to this fund by act of March 3, 1899.

Reorganization of Marine-Hospital Bureau.

The Surgeon-General represents that a reorganization of the divisions of his office was made imperatively necessary during the past summer by reason of increased work connected with the care of sick and disabled seamen, and by the opening of new marine-hospital stations; also by the operation of the act of Congress approved February 15, 1893, entitled "An Act granting additional powers to and imposing additional duties upon the Marine-Hospital Service," and the extension of the national quarantine service to the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico.

The Bureau as now organized consists of six divisions, each under a commissioned medical officer: First, Division of Marine Hospitals and Relief; second, Division of Domestic Quarantine; third, Division of Foreign Quarantine; fourth, Division of Sanitary Reports and Statistics; fifth, Division of Personnel and Accounts; and, sixth, Miscellaneous Division.

Hygienic laboratory.

In the early part of the last fiscal year the investigations, covering a period of thirteen months, of the pollution of the Potomac River water were completed. The results were confirmatory of the report submitted to the last Congress, Senate document 211, and they indicate clearly the necessity for filtration of the District of Columbia water supply before it is furnished to consumers.

The work in connection with car sanitation has been carried so far that further investigation is unnecessary, and a complete report thereon is in preparation.

Experiments to test the efficiency of formaldehyd as a disinfectant have claimed attention throughout the year, and a report has been published upon "Disinfection with formaldehyd in a vacuum chamber combined with dry heat."

Bacteriological and pathological work in the investigation of the cause of the epidemic of meningitis which prevailed in many localities, including the city of Washington, has been carried on during the year, and is still in progress.

The work of the laboratory has included also the examination of specimens transmitted from the stations, and an investigation into the nature of pneumonia, Malta fever, and typhoid fever. The immunization of a horse against typhoid fever has been progressing satisfactorily, and a series of experiments are now in progress to test the value, in the prevention or cure of the disease, of the serum obtained from this animal.

Following the report of the commission on yellow fever, the immunization of a horse was at once begun with a view of obtaining a serum that will prove efficacious in the prevention and cure of yellow fever. This work is still in progress.

The Surgeon-General renews the recommendation made in the previous year that the laboratory be removed from its present location in the Bureau, and that a special building be provided for it. This laboratory has complete equipment, and in view of its important and practical character the facilities for its conduct should be increased by the erection of a suitable building.

National quarantine service—Domestic.

The Marine-Hospital Service now owns and operates 13 large and complete quarantine stations, which, the Surgeon-General reports, with their boarding vessels, disinfecting apparatus, hospitals and personnel, add materially to the administrative duties of his office. There were 3,838 vessels inspected and 370 disinfected at these stations during the fiscal year. There are, besides, 9 stations where inspection of incoming vessels is conducted by officers of the Service.

New quarantine station near Astoria, Oreg.—In accordance with the act of Congress approved July 1, 1898, a site for a quarantine station has been selected in the State of Washington, near Astoria, Oreg., not far from the mouth of the Columbia River. The purchase of this site, with the buildings thereon, has been arranged, but its consummation has been necessarily deferred pending the examination of title. On account of urgency, temporary provision has been made, and quarantine examination of incoming vessels is now being conducted.

Savannah quarantine.—In April a proposal was received from the mayor and city council of the city of Savannah to turn over the function and plant of the Savannah quarantine to the Marine-Hospital Service. This tender was made at the time when large bodies of troops were being returned to the United States from Cuba, using Savannah as a port of entry. The quarantine work connected therewith devolved almost entirely upon the Marine-Hospital Service, and such fact, together with the expressed confidence of the city of Savannah in the Marine-Hospital Service, led to this tender.

The quarantine was accepted under section 8 of the act approved February 15, 1893, and the buildings leased at a nominal figure for two years, the proposal being that at the expiration of this period the Government should purchase the property of the Savannah quarantine at a price to be fixed by arbitration, or, if the city of Savannah desired to resume its quarantine functions, any improvement made by the Government should be paid for by the city at a price to be fixed by arbitration. The Department, being unauthorized to formally accept these terms, agreed to recommend to Congress the legislation necessary to carry out the intent thereof. Accordingly, the necessary appropriation is recommended in the Book of Estimates. The transfer was effected on April 18, and the station is now being conducted as a national quarantine station.

The Savannah quarantine station, from a sanitary standpoint, is of the greatest importance, Savannah being the principal city of the South Atlantic seacoast, and the vessels entering there are of an especially dangerous character, inasmuch as they come from tropical ports. During the last year there were 445 vessels subjected to quarantine inspection at that port, of which number 58 were infected. The acquisition of this quarantine was in accordance with the spirit as well as the letter of the law of 1893, which contemplates the surrender by State and local quarantines of their quarantine functions to the National Government. This is rightly regarded as an important step in the attainment of a strictly national quarantine.

Mullet Key detention camp.

On account of new fortifications on Egmont Key, the War Department demanded the removal of the detention camp which had been established by the Marine-Hospital Service on this island during the war with Spain, and transferred to the custody of this Department the adjoining Mullet Key. The camp, therefore, has been transferred to Mullet Key. This is essentially a quarantine camp, necessary for the detention of people who may have been exposed to yellow fever before permitting entry at the important port of Port Tampa.

There is a State quarantine on Mullet Key, occupied by consent of the War Department before the transfer of the island to this Department. It is without facilities for the detention of suspects, however, as provided by the detention camp established there by the Marine-Hospital Service.

Craney Island.

The Department has also received from the Navy Department the right of possession of Craney Island, a small island in the vicinity of Norfolk, Va., which, under the direction and control of the Marine-Hospital Service, is utilized for the reception of smallpox patients from Portsmouth, Norfolk, and neighboring localities, each city meeting its own expenses.

Post epidemic disinfection and aëration.

During the winter of 1898-99 disinfection of houses and contents was performed in the several localities in Louisiana and Mississippi infected during the yellow-fever outbreak in 1898.

In the city of New Orleans the Marine-Hospital Service, by request of the State and city boards of health, and with their cooperation, undertook an inspection and thorough aëration of houses where the fever had prevailed. The number of infected houses was so great that nothing more than aëration on bright, cold days was attempted. The Surgeon-General believes there is little doubt of the value of this work, as

shown by the lateness and limited number of cases that developed during the past fall.

Sanitary operations connected with the return of troops from Cuba and Porto Rico.

Early in the spring, before the onset of the rainy season, the President determined to return to the United States troops in Cuba and Porto Rico no longer required there for military purposes. Yellow fever having prevailed among some of these troops, and because of the uncertainty with regard to others, the disinfection of all their baggage was deemed necessary. Arrangements were perfected with the Quartermaster's Department, which rendered valuable cooperation and assistance, and the camp equipage and baggage of all the troops, about 25,000 in number, was effectively disinfected by the Marine-Hospital Service at six quarantine stations during March and April. Moreover, soldiers returning after April 1 were required by the regulations to be held in detention camps for a period of five days to demonstrate their freedom from infection. About 12,000 were thus detained under the direct surveillance of the national quarantine officers. The work was highly successful. There has been no infection traceable to the baggage or personnel of the troops connected with this movement.

Yellow fever—National Soldiers' Home, Virginia.

In the latter part of July last an epidemic of yellow fever appeared in the National Soldiers' Home, near Hampton, Va., the management of which was given over entirely to the Marine-Hospital Service, whose efforts to suppress the same were successful, there having been a total of 45 cases and 13 deaths. The success has but one parallel, that at McHenry, Miss., in 1898.

In his annual report the Surgeon-General discusses the probable origin of the fever, and describes the methods adopted to suppress it.

The epidemic excited unusual attention because of the peril to which some thirty-five hundred veterans of the civil war were exposed, and because of the terrible ravages of this disease in Norfolk and vicinity in previous years. As usual in all epidemics, endeavor was made by irresponsible parties to throw doubt upon the character of the disease, but the opinion of the physicians, twelve or more in number, who saw the cases, among them experts of national reputation and one sent by the State of Louisiana, leaves no question as to the diagnosis.

The Surgeon-General gives credit to the physicians of the Home and its governor for their prompt and intelligent action, and calls attention to the lesson to be derived from this epidemic, namely, the necessity of promptly recognizing and announcing the disease. The incident is encouraging as demonstrating that when this is done the spread of the disease may be checked.

Yellow fever in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Despite the work of the Service and the Louisiana State board of health during the winter of 1898-99 in aërating houses and the contents thereof, infected during the outbreak of yellow fever in New Orleans in the fall of 1898, the disease again appeared as a recrudescence, the first case having been noted in the city of New Orleans in May, 1899, but there has been no very wide spread, and up to the present time the total number of cases reported has been less than one hundred.

In September, yellow fever was reported in Jackson, Miss., and Mississippi City; but in these places, as in New Orleans, the tendency to spread has been limited, and the cases have been few.

In both Louisiana and Mississippi officers of the Marine-Hospital Service have been present to insure the execution of the Treasury quarantine regulations and give aid to the local health authorities. Officers have also been detailed to investigate rumors and pass upon the nature of suspected cases in many localities.

Yellow fever in Key West and Miami, Fla.

On August 27 the Marine-Hospital Bureau received the first announcement of the existence of yellow fever in Key West, though subsequent developments indicate that it had previously prevailed there in mild form for several weeks. The management of the epidemic in the city itself was left, as is contemplated by the law, to the State quarantine authorities, the efforts of the Marine-Hospital Service being directed toward preventing the disease from spreading to other portions of the State and to other States. Accordingly, the Service established a maritime patrol around the island of Key West and a detention camp on Dry Tortugas, 60 miles distant, where persons desiring to leave might undergo the required period of detention. To October 20 there had been reported 1,230 cases of yellow fever and 60 deaths. Many cases of a mild type have doubtless been unreported, as a number of the Cuban physicians in the city have failed to report their cases. The epidemic is rapidly on the decrease.

The disease was subsequently discovered at Miami, Fla., the first official announcement being made October 19, with the statement that it had probably been existing in a mild form unrecognized for two months. There have been reported to October 23, 20 cases and 2 deaths. It has not been determined whether the yellow fever at Miami is traceable to the fever at Key West, and if it is, whether the cases were not existing there before the quarantine patrol had been placed around the island of Key West.

Miami has been placed under quarantine, and the Marine-Hospital Service has prepared a small detention camp at Fulford, a few miles north, for people wishing to leave Miami. The lateness of the season renders a widespread prevalence improbable.

The Surgeon-General reports that prior to the announcement of the fever there had been a number of cases of so-called dengue fever, many of which were without doubt mild cases of yellow fever. He deprecates the unwillingness of physicians to acknowledge the serious nature of supposed cases of dengue fever, and in his report urges that measures be taken to prevent the spread of dengue, since that disease is so often associated with yellow fever.

Quarantine on the Texas-Mexican border.

On account of the prevalence of yellow fever and smallpox in Mexico quarantine officers were stationed at the three principal railroad crossings from Mexico into Texas—at El Paso, Eagle Pass, and Laredo. Passengers from Mexico were obliged to give evidence of not having been in any yellow fever infected district in Mexico for ten days prior to their arrival at the border, this inspection service being supplemented by a system of sanitary certificates issued in Mexico.

Aid in the suppression of smallpox.

In accordance with the announcement made in the annual report for 1898, the assistance of the Marine-Hospital Service in the suppression of smallpox has been limited chiefly to expert services in diagnosing the disease in many localities and instructions to the local authorities in the methods to be pursued. The methods of suppressing smallpox in communities are so plain, and the protection of individuals so evidently the duty of the communities themselves, that the Marine-Hospital Service will not assume any financial obligations connected therewith. The Bureau has, however, issued a large number of a précis upon the methods of diagnosing and suppressing this disease, which have proved of great value to local authorities. Expert officers have been detailed in several of the States, at the request of the governors or health authorities thereof, for duty as above indicated. A general vaccination of crews of vessels on the Great Lakes, the rivers, and Atlantic and Gulf coasts was conducted by the officers of the Marine-Hospital Service during the past winter to assist in the movement to suppress this disease.

The Surgeon-General calls particular attention to the necessity of vaccination as a reliable preventive. The Bureau has officially declared that no vaccine virus except that known as glycerinized vaccine lymph should be used, and that the purity of this form of virus is unquestioned. The prejudice against vaccination which has heretofore to some extent prevailed is no longer justified in view of this perfected preparation, by use of which untoward results from vaccination need not be feared. This form of virus is easily procured, and upon its free use, in conjunction with the recognized quarantine procedures, must reliance be placed for the suppression of this loathsome disease now so generally prevalent.

National quarantine service—Insular and foreign.

Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines.—In January of the present year an order was signed by the President and the Secretary of War transferring all the maritime quarantine of Cuba and Porto Rico to the Marine-Hospital Service. In March another Executive order was issued declaring that the expenses of this service should be paid from the revenues of the islands, and setting aside \$300,000 annually from tonnage-tax receipts of Cuba as a quarantine fund. A thorough organization was effected as soon as possible, there being at the present time some thirty officers of the Service in Cuba and seven in Porto Rico. The selection and assignment of officers, the promulgation of regulations, the purchase of disinfecting apparatus, boarding vessels, etc., has been a work of great magnitude and importance.

Two complete sets of most recent and approved type of disinfecting apparatus for quarantine stations have been sent to Manila, with the approval of the Secretary of War, and arrangements are now under consideration for their use in protection against the plague and other diseases prevailing in the Orient.

Central American fruit ports.—In April the Marine-Hospital Service organized an inspection service for the fruit ports of Central America. Seven medical officers were assigned to the United States consulates in as many ports, their duties being so to assure the safety of fruit vessels before leaving the foreign port as to prevent their detention and the consequent ruin of cargoes on arrival at ports of the United States.

Mexico.—On account of the violent epidemic of yellow fever in Vera Cruz, Mexico, an officer of the Service was detailed in the office of the United States consul at that port, and subsequently, on account of the same disease in various interior towns in Mexico and the danger of its being conveyed across the Texas border, a commissioned officer, with the expressed assent of the State Department, was sent to the City of Mexico to organize a system of inspection and disinfection of infected baggage, in order to facilitate the travel of people across the Texas border. Some twenty localities in Mexico were infected with yellow fever. Sanitary inspectors were appointed to act in conjunction with the consular service in furnishing certificates to be presented at the border to the quarantine officers stationed there.

Acknowledgment is due the Mexican Government for its courteous attitude toward this measure of the United States.

Medical officers in other foreign ports.—On account of the increasing prevalence of plague in Asia and certain portions of Europe and Africa, officers of the Marine-Hospital Service have been detailed for duty at Honolulu, Yokohama, Hongkong and Naples. Inspections have also been made by Marine-Hospital surgeons of Oporto and Lisbon, Portugal; Barcelona, Spain; Marseilles, France; Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt; and the principal seaports of western Europe whence emigrants

sail for the United States, including Bremen, Antwerp, Hamburg, and Rotterdam. As provided by the law of February 15, 1893, Marine-Hospital officers have been detailed to serve in the consular offices at these principal ports. The Bureau has also a medical representative upon the sanitary commission in Constantinople, and a medical officer at Rio de Janeiro.

Leprosy investigation.

Measures have been taken to put in effect the act passed by the last Congress authorizing a commission of medical officers to ascertain the number of cases of leprosy now in the United States.

Cause of yellow fever.

With regard to yellow fever, attention is invited to the report of the commission of medical officers of the Marine-Hospital Service detailed by direction of the President to make an investigation into the cause of this disease. Their findings are important, inasmuch as they verify those of Sanarelli in his discovery of the bacillus icteroides. They further demonstrate that this disease is received into the human system through the respiratory tract, and indicate the probability of a protective and curative serum similar in its use to that now employed in the treatment of diphtheria. While this discovery gives ground for hope of amelioration in the matter of yellow fever in the future, the Surgeon-General calls attention to other measures deemed highly essential.

The success attending the efforts of the Government authorities in Cuba in diminishing the prevalence of this disease by sanitation is an object lesson to be studied by our own and all other governments of the Western Hemisphere. It is known that there are many seaports of this hemisphere where yellow fever is endemic because of bad sanitary conditions, readily removable by proper sanitary engineering. An inquiry is now being conducted concerning the ports of the Western Hemisphere where yellow fever constantly prevails, with a view of definitely determining the reason therefor, and proving, if possible, that it is due to want of proper drainage, sewerage, and cleanliness of the harbor. The report suggests that in the interests of commerce, as well as of life and health, the time may come when an international agreement may be effected between the republics of this hemisphere by which the unsanitary conditions which perpetuate this western pest in certain ports will be considered a just cause of complaint by the other republics, and such quarantine or other restrictions imposed by mutual agreement upon the government possessing the offending port as will cause it to adopt the necessary measures for the removal of the evil. The Surgeon-General points out that action of this character would be far-reaching in its effects upon the welfare and commercial prosperity of all.

National quarantine law.

The bills introduced into the Senate and House of Representatives of the last Congress to strengthen the national quarantine law, though strongly indorsed by both the Senate and House committees, were not acted upon. The Surgeon-General points to the fact that these amendments can have no justifiable opposition, at least those relating to maritime quarantine; and in view of the threatening bubonic plague he urges that legislation be enacted strengthening the national quarantine service in the manner indicated in the above mentioned bills, which have already received the approval of this Department.

Instructions to consuls concerning medical officers detailed for duty at the consulates.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 12, 1899.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st instant containing the names of medical officers who have been detailed for duty at various consulates in Europe and asking that the consuls be notified.

In reply, I have to inform you that suitable instructions in the matter have been sent to the consuls. I inclose a copy of one of these instructions, which are all alike.

Respectfully,
HON. SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

JOHN HAY.

[Inclosure.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 11, 1899.

SIR: I have to inform you that, with the approval of the President, P. A. Surg. H. W. Wickes, of the Marine-Hospital Service has been detailed to your office for duty in connection with the enforcement of the quarantine laws and regulations. Dr. Wickes is to be considered as forming part of your staff and will have charge of quarantine matters and the responsibility for bills of health will rest upon him. You will, however, sign these documents jointly with him.

I inclose a copy of a letter from the Treasury Department from which you will see that medical officers have been detailed to all the important points in Europe from which emigration to the United States takes place. This action is taken on account of the danger arising from a possible introduction of the plague into the United States.

The Department will expect you to cooperate heartily with the medical officer and render him all possible assistance in the performance of his important duties.

Respectfully,

THOS. W. CRIDLER,
Third Assistant Secretary.

MR. SAMUEL M. TAYLOR,
Consul of the United States, Glasgow, Scotland.

Detail of medical officer for duty at Santos, Brazil.

By reason of the outbreak of bubonic plague at Santos, Brazil, it was deemed necessary to detail an officer for duty at that port for the purpose of keeping the Bureau informed as to the progress of the disease and to prevent its introduction into the United States through shipping.